"Being One, as if Many." De-gendering and Re-gendering Miracles in late 17th-century Hungary.

Ildikó Sz. Kristóf

(Published in Attila Kiss and György E. Szőnyi eds. *The Iconology of Gender I. Traditions and Historical Perspectives.* (Eastern & Western Traditions of European Iconography 3; Papers in English and American Studies XV). Szeged: JATEPress, 2008, 141-150.)

"*Being one, as if many*": this phrase, referring to one of the most important symbolic, allegorical characteristics of the Virgin Mary is included in a collection of miracle stories published as a book in the Hungarian language in 1698 in Wien, Austria. The collection is entitled *Titkos Értelmő róza a'vagy a Förtő mellett lévő Boldog Aszszony csudálatos érdeminek Drága illattyáról, és Jó-tételményinek, s' lelki, testi üdvösséges orvoslásinak egynéhány Példáiról együgyüen emlekező könyvecske* [Rose of secret meaning, or booklet recalling in a humble way the precious odour of the wonderful merit as well as some examples of the gratitude and the graceful spiritual and bodily healings of the Virgin of Fertő] and its authors -Franciscan friars of a shrine of the Virgin near the lake Fertő in Moson county, Northwest Hungary[1]- used the phrase while discussing Mary's well-known, traditional flower symbols.[2] In my own understanding however, this metaphor has much to

1

The shrine is in Boldogasszonyfa, which today belongs to Austria and called Frauenkirchen. The miracles happened there in the second half of the 17th century were published in Latin (1679), German (1697) and Slovakian (1698) editions as well, see T k 1993, 388; For the present study which represents my very first efforts to investigate in the late 17th-century religious construction of gender I studied the Hungarian edition only. The specific genre of miraculum in early modern Hungary has been studied thoroughly by Éva Knapp and Gábor Tüskés in their numerous statistical and textual analyses, see Knapp 1983, 1989 and 1995-1997; Knapp and Tüskés 1991, 1996; Knapp-Tüskés -Galavics 1994; T k 1992, 1993, 1997; Tüskés and Knapp 1989-1990. Let me express my gratitude here to Gábor Tüskés for his valuable comments and critics on an earlier version of this paper.

2

say about a particular textual-iconographical strategy, too that the Franciscans resorted to in compiling the narratives of *miraculum* and so, about their remarkable ways of manipulating gender issues as well.

I will try to grasp this strategy in four steps. After having given a general assessment of how actually these miracle stories represent gender I will point to the kind of textual processing that seems to work behind this representation; I will then discuss the possible reasons for this strategy, and, fourth, the necessary implications of it, i.e. the religious interpretation of femininity and masculinity. As to the first point, not less than 170 individual *miracula* are included in *Titkos értelmő róza* and, any modern reader would be surprised to see how *un-/de*-gendered these narratives are. Although the miracles are said to have happened to a more or less equal number of men (81) and women (77)[3] -town and village dwellers in late 17th-century Northwest Hungary-, there, where we could expect significant differences in their respective narratives,[4] more similarity than alterity is to be found. In our collection women's stories and men's stories are told according to an amazingly similar

[3] The phrase in Hungarian is "egy lévén magában, mintha sok vólna," see Titkos értelmő Róza, 210. Among those men and women there are 17 "boys" and 13 "girls," i.e. younger people whose age is not always given exactly. Another 12 miracles are said to have happened either to whole communities (3) or to whole families (9) in which cases it is not possible to provide any distribution of sex. All of my statistical estimations presented here are based solely on the Hungarian edition of Titkos értelmő róza and do not always correspond exactly to the more detailed quantification of Gábor Tüskés. For his results of the gender distribution of the pilgrims to Boldogasszony see Tüskés 1993, 283 and 287.

[4] From among the now desperately numerous historical studies on the differences between women's and men's narrative strategies in religious and criminal discourse I still owe the most to those classics of Bynum 1984 and 1987 as well as to Davis 1987 and 1995. Ethnological analyses of women's discourse also abound and show themselves a peculiar gender specificity of textual construction, see for ex. Crain 1991 or Lawless 1994; a more general, cultural anthropological perspective is provided in Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974 as well as in Ortner and Whitehead 1989. I am especially grateful, as always, to Gábor Klaniczay for his critical remarks on my present mélange of historical-anthropological-textual approach to a (n essentially male) body of religious texts.

structure as well as in an amazingly similar language, showing almost no peculiarities of gender. This "almost" is, however, of great importance and I will return to it further on.

Thus, one of the first impressions that one can obtain of the characters of these narratives -be they women or men- is that they are more "textual" than sexual (more neutral than gendered) or sociological figures; something like floating in the air of late Baroque Franciscan -and also universal, Christian- piety. Although identified by name (surnames as well as first names are always given)[5] and identified also by residence (said to have been living in a particular village or town),[6] these women and men are framed regularly into the role of an "ideal" or "exemplary Christian," seeking tirelessly the grace of the Virgin Mary. And this role -as the rather didactic message of the book mediates it- is neither female nor male, or it is of both in the same time. In searching for the ways of recovering from their misfortunes and finding the right way -with no exception- in the end, they act in the stories like puppets on the string of Providence, having almost no individual, social, let alone, gender characteristics.

---

5 Although it is uncertain to estimate nationality on the basis of names, it seems that the majority of those involved in the miraculous events were either of Hungarian or Austrian.

6 Most of the villages, market towns and cities, mentioned in the stories, are to be found either in the broader Northwestern region of Hungary (like Abda, Bezenye, Csorna, Gönyű, Győr, Kismarton, Komárom, Kóny, Magyaróvár, Öttevény, Pápa, Rajka, Sopron etc), or in today's Austria (primarily the Danube-Leitha region like Altenburg, Breitenbrunn, Bruck, Czondorf, Minihof, Neusiedel, Pandorf, Prodersdorf, Pruck, Vienna etc) and Slovakia (like Malacka/Malacky, Pozsony/Bratislava etc). More distant places mentioned are Visegrád and Buda in Hungary, and the castle of Zerin in Croatia. For a map and a chronology of the gradual broadening of this area between 1655 and 1696, see Tüskés 1993, 346 and 367-368.

The second impression one can get reading *Titkos értelmő róza* is probably more striking than the first. Instead of the human protagonists, it is the figure of the Virgin Mary herself that *is* gendered in quite many respects; it is to *her* that various explicitly female and, moreover, male metaphors and symbols are attributed, as will be shown in the second part of my paper.

Let us turn to the second point now and see how these miracle stories came into being and how they function as particular *texts*. It is reasonable to suppose -as it is indicated in the Preface of the book[7]- that they have a double - or rather triple - origin as far as late 17th-century local communication is concerned. On the one hand, they can be considered quite ordinary *oral* products of Northwest Hungarian popular religiosity, developed around a local shrine of the Virgin. In this sense, the miraculous events -mostly healings- that were put in writing and, further on, in print, could have been experienced indeed by women and men of flesh and blood, namely in a time span of 1655 to 1695.[8] Shorter or longer stories relating miracles could circulate in the surrounding region; stories, which by now unfortunately lost their original oral form. On the other hand, the Franciscan friars -guardians of the shrine- seem to have contributed themselves to enhance the reputation of the shrine as an important pilgrimage place by confirming miracles attributed to the picture of the Virgin of Fertő and by collecting and *writing down* miracle stories[9] as well as selecting (and, most probably,

---

7 Elöl-Járó Levél a Keresztény Olvasóhoz, Titkos értelmő róza (pages not numbered).

8 At least, this is the beginning and the end of the period from which the miracle stories of Titkos telmő róza come; almost every story is dated.

9 The story N° 164, dating from 1694 and recounting the miraculous recovery of a blind child, describes itself this procedure saying that the mother "told and, with all her conscience, proved that miraculous event in the sacristy, both lay people and friars having been present, and she wanted to have it put down diligently, at

reworking) them for *print*. There are reasons to suppose, however, that the printed stories -those in *Titkos értelmő róza*- differ considerably from those having told among town and village people of that time[10] and that this difference has to do with gender issues, too.

Let us see first in what respect and then, why.

Each and every of the *miracula* published by the Franciscans in 1698 are pretty short stories and are reduced to a common, extremely simplistic narrative scheme. Vladimir Propp would have been happy to see texts showing their basic structure or "functions" so easily and directly, at least at first sight (Propp 1968). Similarly to oral folk tales, studied by Propp, our miracle stories consist morphologically of only a couple -in this case, four or five- recurrent narrative units. I could establish the following ones: 1/ the occurrence of some misfortune (mostly, an illness); 2/ the search for remedies (loosing faith in human remedies, that is in doctors and medicine); 3/ identifying the shrine and the picture of the Virgin of Fertő as the right remedy and making a vow to visit it; 4/ the occurrence of the miraculous recovery (immediately after the vow at home or later on at the shrine); and, sometimes 5/ visiting the shrine after the miracle has happened in order to show gratitude to the Virgin.

A similar technique of telling misfortune or recovery stories is known from medieval hagiographical literature and canonization trials as well as from the documents of early modern witchcraft trials; the testimonies of the witnesses being -hypothetically- as close to

---

the greater glory of God as well as at the Honour of the Virgin Mary." Titkos értelmő róza, 311.

10 There would be an exciting possibility to compare the printed stories included in Titkos értelmő róza to their surviving manuscript (I thank Gábor Tüskés for calling my attention to the existence of this written version, see Tüskés 1993, 66 and 388); still it would not mean, as a matter of fact, to be able to reach the original oral narratives behind.

(or, considering the fact of being written down, as far from) orality as our miracle stories are (Klaniczay 1990/91 and 1997; Kristóf 1990; 1997 and 1998, esp. 107-109). What is interesting indeed in the case of our Franciscan friars is that this narrative technique is imposed upon men's as well as women's stories of recovery to such an extent, and so rigidly, that it does not leave much place for details concerning the specific social or gender characteristics of the human beings involved. Nor does the language of the stories -a rather dry and iconographically poor language- evoke any significant symbols of the female or the male part of the human race, motifs are simplified, details skipped: as if the aim would be indeed to homogenize, de-socialize, de-gender the human world. I suppose that the Franciscans did conserve the original -oral- narrative structure of the miracle stories that they heard from local people and pilgrims while reducing, and, most probably, changing many of their individual features.

Let me point to some significant characteristics of the printed *miracula* to support my hypothesis.

Although professions are often mentioned (blacksmiths, potters, schoolmasters, surgeons, peasants, shepherds, soldiers etc figure in the stories)[11] they have actually nothing to do with the very "plot" of the narrative, namely seeking grace and recovery. Each and everyone does it in the same way, as each and everyone gains it in the same way in the end.

11

Most of the known professions are of typical urban and rural ones; beyond the above mentioned ones there is a mason, an adobe-bricklayer, a stone-cutter, a postman, a customs officer, a servant of a parish priest and there are butchers, millers as well as nuns and members of religious societies. See also Tüskés 1993, 271 and 273.

Individual women and men appearing in the stories are cast into narrative clichés such as “the honorable girl,” “the honorable lady,””the good mother,” “the honorable man,” “the caring father,” “the beloved child.” Each and every character is good, honorable, and most importantly, pious.

Among the kinds of illnesses which are referred to most frequently, there is not one which could be qualified as specifically female or specifically male. Quite as many women as men turn to the Virgin of Fertő because of being crippled, being lame or paralysed in their hands, being dumb or mute, having bad eyes or being blind, or showing the signs of epilepsy.[12]

Similarly, among the *ex voto*s -symbolic objects said to have been left at the shrine after the miracle had happened- there is not one which would refer more to the world of one of the two sexes. Hands, legs, heads and hearts (made of wood, wax or silver) are the most typical signs left behind, as well as the crutches of the crippled (for a long list of these *ex voto*s see *Titkos értelmő róza*, 153-154).

All in all, the particular technique and the language of the narration all contribute to make our miracle stories rather empty of any concrete social or gender aspects, let alone, iconography. The Franciscans' collection as a whole does remind us of this attribute of the Virgin Mary: “being One” -that is, homogenized, Christian-, “as if Many.”

12

Another sign of generalization and stereotipization -or that of the patients' poor knowledge in this respect- is the fact that the miracle stories tend to define illnesses rather vaguely; a good number of the described symptoms -such as suffering “great pains,” being sick for a long time- do not seem to refer to any concrete, recognizable kind of illness (46 stories altogether). It is remarkable, however, that other groups of narratives do identify specific types of health problems, like a headache (4 stories), or a veritable disease like a plague epidemic (3 or 4 stories). For a statistical estimation of the most typical illnesses see Note 17.

The reasons for this peculiar social and sexual deprivation (or unification) -and I am turning to the third point now- are not so miraculous. I have already hinted at the fact that the shrine had been built only some decades earlier (it was consecrated in 1669) than the Franciscans published *Titkos értelmő róza*. It was Prince Pál Esterházy, the Palatine of Hungary who donated a picture of the Virgin Mary -which was previously in his own possession- to the Franciscans and financed the installation of a chapel on his estate to place it in.[13] So, the main purpose of the friars to publish the collection was evidently propagandistic: they wanted to advertise the shrine of the Virgin of Fertő as a new pilgrimage place, to promote her cult among as many people as possible, and that with no respect at all of age, social status, profession or gender.[14] It is right here, in my view, that a possible explanation for the clichés of the stories is to be found: the Franciscans' intention was that *anyone* reading or, for that matter, hearing these stories[15] would find her or his place in the series of the proposed stereotypes and that she or he would identify with one of them. ("Being One, as if Many": it did not obviously matter much, which cliché one chose...)

---

13 The story is said in details and the picture is shown in one of Esterházy's own collection of miracle stories, see Esterházy 1994, 65-69. For an exact chronology of the foundation of the church and the Franciscan cloister by 1670, see Tüskés 1993, 308. On Esterházy see Knapp-Tüskés-Galavics 1994 and Szörényi 1995.

14 As the Franciscans put it: "These examples would open up the gate and show the way for each and every poor miserable, and they would lead them by the hand to the Virgin Mary" (Titkos értelmő róza, 114-115).

15 The explanatory text of the story N° 98 addresses its potential audience in a way which reveals the most important channel of communication at that time for those unable to read: "Oh you sinful sons and daughters of Adam, who would read these short examples, or would hear them read..." Titkos értelmő róza, 160 [my emphasis].

We should, however, count with another -and in this case, iconographical- reason for this narrative rigidity and stereotypization. It is mentioned in quite many of the printed miracle stories that the recovered women and men offered a *picture* as an *ex voto* to the Virgin of Fertő, i.e. they made the story of their miraculous healing painted and donated the tableau to the shrine.[16] It would be extremely important to know whether some -how many?- of the printed *miracula* go back to a pictorial origin like this, their written version having been lost or having, for that matter, never existed...

There might be nevertheless a third, and more complex reason for such patterning of human beings, and especially their illnesses; a reason which seems to have rooted more deeply in the particular features of Franciscan piety. This reason, however, would lead us away from the world of the humans, since it has more to do with the Franciscans' *spiritual* construction of gender and so with the process of *re*-gendering miracle stories in a remarkable way.

It is known that since the installation of the order the Franciscans have been among the promotors of the cult of the Virgin Mary, a female saint *par excellence*. The shrine of Fertő in Northwest Hungary as well as the collection of the miracles happened there are themselves put into the service of this particular goal. In this respect, it is impossible not to

16

So did a certain Menyhár t Schweincser from a certain Gerhaus, whose cart fell off a high mountain in 1690 but the Virgin of Fertő came to his help according to the story and neither he nor his three horses were injured; he offered a painted picture of the miracle to the shrine in order to "incite all who would come here and would look at the picture like at a bright mirror and would contemplate this miraculous event in it to praise and glorify the Graceful and miraculous Mother of God " Titkos értelmő róza, 203: N° 113. According to the statistics of Gábor Tüskés, roughly 21 % of the ex-votos offered to the shrine of the Virgin of Fertő was a painted picture, see Tüskés 1993, 188. On the picturial representation of miracles as offers to shrines in 17-18th-century Hungary in general see op. cit., 256-270.

recognize that the most typical illnesses whose curing is attributed to the Virgin in the stories - lameness, paralysis, blindness, muteness and epilepsy[17] - are the very same whose miraculous healing was attributed originally to a male saint/god - Jesus Christ - in the New Testament. As they admit in the Preface of the book, our Franciscans made a *selection* of the miracle stories told to them by village and town people -"from among the many miracles [...] it is convenient to put *some* in writing and to report them before Christians"[18]- and many other of their statements as well as the content of the stories themselves suggest that they wrote down -and, later, published- mostly those narratives which seem to have justified their claim of a Virgin Mary possessing a healing power equal to that of Jesus Christ.[19]

17

Beyond the cases of the already mentioned generalized sickness the greatest number of the stories identifies what could be defined as locomotor diseases (29 stories referring to patients being lame, paralysed in one or both of their legs or hands or having "insufferable pain" in their limbs). Another group speaks of cases of visual disorder (11 stories describing people being either blind or having been injured in their eyes). Deafness and/or muteness is mentioned in a smaller, but still significant number (6 stories), and there is the other big group of narratives describing "epileptic" symptoms (at least 16 stories). Other -not evangelical- types of illness seem to occur in a smaller number (problems of digestion: 4 stories; heart disease: 3 stories; the shivers: 1 story; injury and wound: 1 story, etc). Locomotor diseases, sickness concerning the head (like blindness) and epileptic diseases are the most frequently mentioned types of illness in the case of three other 17-18th century pilgrimage places (Celldömölk, Bodajk and Homokkomárom) in Hungary, too, according to the statistics made by Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp on the basis of the respective collections of miracle stories there, see Tüskés and Knapp 1989-1990, 74. While the latter study argues for a rather direct relation between historical reality and narratives of miraculum, I myself would suspect that some editorial principles might work in these cases, too.

18

Elöl-Járó Levél a Keresztény Olvasóho, Titkos értelmő róza (**pages not numbered**).

19

The miracles of the Virgin of Fertő and the particular evangelical miracles of Jesus Christ are discussed consistently by the friars as parallel, as if identical ones. Titkos értelmő róza, 52; 59; 134; 151-154. An example of this parallelism from among the many: "What the Holy Scripture says of the healed lame in the Book of the Apostles, the copy of that we can observe in this particular miraculous story: since what the graceful God did for the name of Jesus before the crowd, the same he did at the supplication of the Mother of his Holy Son..." Titkos értelmő róza, 59 [my emphasis]. The four cases of "diabolic spell" or "demonic

A significant verbal-iconographical program can be traced indeed throughout the book: the effort of the friars to cast Mary's figure into a powerful female counterpart of Christ. As I have already hinted at, as opposed to the human beings, the Virgin Mary's image *is* gendered in our stories and the process of gendering seems to consist of attaching certain epithets, comparisons, metaphors, allegories and symbols to Mary as well as interpreting them as implying either female or male meanings. Our Franciscan authors have compiled an allegorical-mystical explanation -a spiritual lesson- to each of the 170 miracle stories and it is in these texts -resorting much to the *Song of Solomon* and referring to medieval ecclesiastical authorities and mystics like St. Augustin, St. Anselme, St. Ambrose, St. Bonaventure, Hugo of St. Victor and St. Bernard of Clairveaux etc- that Mary obtains her "spiritual sex." My point in surveying these explanatory texts is not philological; it is only their gender aspect that I am going to discuss in the following passages.

It is remarkable indeed, how few those metaphors of the Virgin are in these texts to which no explicitly gendered meanings are attributed. "Bridge to heavenly grace" (*Titkos értelmő róza*, 253-254), "glittering star" (op. cit., 246-249), "lighthouse" or "Pharos" showing the right way for Christians (op. cit., 145-148), "perfect and swift Moon" giving her grace to human beings as quickly as the moon changes (op. cit., 214-216); this is practically all as far as her sexually neutral symbols are concerned.

In contrast, there is a whole series of gendered images attached to her, of which the overwhelming ones are female. These images seem to cluster around the following -rather

possession" which also figure in the list of Mary's miraculous healings at Fertő themselves seem to confirm the Franciscans' intention to construct -even in the field of exorcisms- a female "copy" of Jesus.

overlapping- six tropes: *womanhood* (here we have the flowers -the Sunflower, signifying obedience (op. cit., 210); the Hyacinth, signifying humiliation (ibidem)- and other metaphors, such as that Mary's will is soft like wax that can be bent easily (op. cit., 288) etc); *virginity* (signified by another flower, the Lily, since Mary had no bodily communication with men (op. cit., 210)); *fertility* (Mary is said the Gate through which Jesus was born and through which the way goes to heaven (op. cit., 274-275); Mary is the only woman having no pain in giving birth etc (op. cit., 65; 89)); *motherhood* (Mary is the Mother of Grace (op. cit., 223); the Mother of Protection (op. cit., 194-195); the Mother of Consolation (op. cit., 137-140) and the Mother of Love (op. cit., 191-193); *food and nourishing* (Mary is said the Nursing mother of humankind / a Mother breast-feeding human beings (op. cit., 187-188, 192-193): the latter two images are those of Saint Bernard of Clairveaux (on their medieval versions see Bynum 1987, Ch. 9); the inexhaustible See of Grace (op. cit., 256-257); the Oil Tree that feeds human beings by her fruit (op. cit., 300-307); the New Sky or New Heaven nourishing everyone by her abundant rainfall (op. cit., 309-310) etc); *medicine and curing* (she is the Heavenly Doctor Woman (op. cit., 28-31; 51; 57-58; 132-133; 225); the Heavenly Garden of Herbs (op. cit., 105-106); a Precious stone, a Jewel, or Pearl, the real Jaspis curing bleeding (op. cit., 296- 299) etc).

It is remarkable how much this late Baroque Franciscan imagery of the Virgin conserved from its medieval, hagiographical antecedents. What Carolyne W. Bynum could establish for the 12-15th-century Western European mystical (and female) iconography of food, feeding, fasting and procreation (Bynum 1987) seems to stand for its late 17th-century Hungarian counterpart; the majority of Mary's symbols and metaphors is built explicitly upon the biological/bodily functions of women -bleeding, pregnancy, birth giving, suckling- as

well as upon the fluids relating to the latter (blood and milk). It is also significant -and also in line with Bynum's medieval hagiographical findings- that the social aspects of these images -motherhood, caring, nourishing and curing- seem themselves to relate rather directly to these bodily functions; even the images of see water, oil and rain, connected to the trope of *food /nourishing,* might find their counterparts in women's bodily fluids (on medieval concepts relating to the openness of women's bodies see Caciola 1994).

If we turn to the less numerous but still important male images, attached to the figure of the Virgin Mary in the explanatory texts of the Franciscans, we see that men's biological/bodily features figure only implicitly in them; male images seem to suggest primarily social meanings, having no relation at all to bodily functions (for similar medieval findings see again Bynum 1984 and 1987). There are only three tropes in this case: *fighting and the battlefield* (Mary is said the Shield protecting one in battle (*Titkos értelmő róza*, 117-118); the Town surrounded with ramparts or heavy stone walls (op. cit., 195-197); David's Tower furnished with a variety of arms needed in fight (op. cit., 118); Mary is said terrible like a well-equipped army on the battlefield (op. cit., 190); she can defeat even the army of Hell, the Devil and the witches (op. cit., 200)); *captivity* (Mary is the one who liberates captives (op. cit., 111-112)); *curing and support* (beyond the already mentioned evangelical parallels she is said the Helping Crutches (op. cit., 267-268); the Supporting Stick (op. cit., 41; 72-73; 112-114); a Heavy Stone or Rock signifying steadfastness (op. cit., 318-320); Mary is described as having been steadier than Saint Peter himself (op. cit., 320)).

In sum, in this Franciscan iconography the Virgin Mary appears indeed as "being One" i.e. a woman, "as if Many" i.e. having a mix of various feminine *and* masculine, biological *and* social, '*as if*' amazon-like characteristics.[20] The Epilogue of *Titkos értelmő róza* describes her at one point as the heroic Judith of the Old Testament, defeating King Holofernes (op. cit., 335, 336).

The peculiar process of gendering the Virgin, a supernatural figure, in *both* ways, while *de*-gendering the actual women and men of the human world might belong closely together in the Franciscans' strategy of representation. Although Mary's sex seems to have been overwhelmingly more important for the friars than that of the human beings, there are significant exceptions, too, to this "rule." Let me turn to my fourth and last point now and see how some of the Virgin's above-mentioned allegoric, emblematic aspects correspond to some interesting details of the humans' stories themselves. It is these details and it is this *symmetry* between the supernatural world and the world of the humans that could reveal more about the late Baroque religious interpretation of femininity as well as masculinity.

Despite all the de-gendering tendency, female biological functions *do* appear in a handful of the narratives, in women's stories (although only in 6 from the altogether 170 miracula): women visit Mary's shrine because they are pregnant and feel pain in their breasts (*Titkos értelmő róza*, 104: N° 67), because they have excessive pain while giving birth (op. cit., 64-65: N° 29; 88-89: N° 53), because they are suckling babies and, again, have pain in their breasts (op. cit., 43-44: N° 11; 79: N° 44), because they are bleeding (op. cit., 300: N°

[20] A further way of research would be to establish how specific indeed this iconography is, either in late Baroque Hungary or abroad; I would like to thank William Christian Jr. for his suggestions in this respect.

160). Corresponding to Mary's aspect of softness (obedience and humiliation), they are often said to be "too weak" to overcome difficulties (op. cit., 36-37: Nº 6). A significant aspect of this weakness is to be seen in those stories in which either demonic possession is attributed to women, or they are described as victims of witchcraft, against which -both kinds of diabolic attack- they are represented as helpless (op. cit., 47-48: Nº 15; 56-57: Nº 23; 66-67: Nº 32; 68-69: Nº 34; 274-278: Nº 142). And, finally, women's social role is reduced in the miracle stories to the household, mostly to the roles of -the otherwise much patterned- motherhood. There are only two stories in which women appear outside the household, and in both of these cases they figure as nothing else but nuns (op. cit., 267-274: Nº 141 and 279-282: Nº 143).

In contrast to all this domestic/household world of women, and in line with the Virgin Mary's male/social aspect, men's stories contain a relatively large number (15) of various misfortunes *other* than illness. These occur regularly outside the house -in the street, on the road, in other villages and towns, or in the battlefield- showing men belonging to the social world to a considerably larger extent than women. Some are driven away by their wild horses while travelling (op. cit., 44-45: Nº 12; 53-54: Nº 20), others' carts fall off a bridge (op. cit., 252-256: Nº 135) or a mountain (op. cit., 201-204: Nº 113), one is attacked by robbers on the road (op. cit., 117-123: Nº 78), the other's ship is wrecked in the river (op. cit., 142-148: Nº 87), one's leg is broken by a wine-cask carried to the market (op. cit., 89-90: Nº 54), the other falls in the river while washing his horses (op. cit., 243-245: 131), and many soldiers find themselves in danger of life in a battle (op. cit., 195-200: Nº 112) or in captivity (op. cit., 111: Nº 74; 112: Nº 75 and 136-140: Nº 85).

Either unconsciously or on purpose, this handful of -more or less- gendered miracle stories conveys basically the same message as the Virgin Mary's gendered symbols do; both indicate a binary structuration of the functions and values connected to the one and the other sex. The religious interpretation of gender, imposed by the Franciscan friars upon the miracle stories identifies *femininity* with *biology* and *weakness* on one side, and puts *masculinity, sociality* and *power* together on the other. It is important, however, that this "binary opposition" -demonstrated as a universally present "outil conceptuel" by classical structuralist anthropology (Lévi-Strauss 1962, esp. 164-193) and criticized as a historically and sexually positioned (essentially male) construction by feminist anthropology (Ortner 1974; Rosaldo 1974; Ortner and Whitehead 1989) as well as by numerous historians (Bynum 1984 and 1987; King 1991; Wiesner 1993) does not seem to be applied in entirely the same way by the friars when constructing human versus spiritual gender. While the female and the male human characters of the above mentioned gendered miracle stories can be and are put indeed on the one or the other pole of the opposition respectively, as if emphasizing the *difference* between the sexes, the figure of the Virgin Mary seems rather to *unite* the two poles, as if emphasizing -not at all the similarity of the latter, but- *a new quality* born of the merging of the two.

I would argue in conclusion that *Titkos értelmő róza* as a whole suggests exactly this new quality of spiritual gender, put forward as one of the models for late Baroque piety. One should not forget the fact that the majority of the humans' stories included in our collection is not gendered at all, as I demonstrated in the first part of my paper. And the reason for this remarkable *asymmetry* between a mostly de-gendered human world and a doubly gendered spiritual one is indicated, I think, by another epithet of the Virgin, emphasized by the Franciscan friars in their book: Mary is the one "who domesticates our wild nature" (*Titkos értelmő róza*, 44-45 and 253-254).[21] The final intention of the Franciscans was, in my view, to convert more and more people to a particular *feminine* model of Christianity that they attempted to popularize by the figure of a *powerful* Virgin Mary. In the process of reworking the original miracle stories for the edition, our friars de-sexualized the flesh and blood human characters of the stories to "re-sexualize" them in another -"domesticated" i.e. spiritual *and female*- domain. Mostly confirming the traditional image of women as being weak and biological (and sometimes also diabolic) creatures, they built their construction of a Mary of strength on exactly this same image. So, the Virgin Mary would *not* lose her femininity in the process of constructing her spiritual aura -as a veritable female counterpart to Jesus Christ-, she would not but gain more force - and *male* force, too- to it (up to the point, as we saw, that she could defeat even Satan and his army, the witches (*Titkos értelmő róza*, 47-48; 233-234)).

Commenting upon the sacred title "consolator of the miserables" -a parallel title of Jesus as well as Mary in the *Litany on the Name of Jesus* and the *Litany of Loreto*-, the

21 One of the versions of this in Hungarian: "folyamodék a vad természetünk megszelédétőjéhez, a Förtő melléki Boldog Aszszonhoz..." (Titkos értelmő róza, 44-45).

Franciscans constructed a spiritual kinship between the human and the heavenly beings and suggested that "Jesus is your Father and the Virgin Mary is your Mother" (op. cit., 136-137); a mother, I would add, who is not mighty enough to raise the dead (this seems to remain the privilege of Jesus[22]), but mighty -*because gendered*- enough to embrace all humanity.

References

Bynum, Caroline Walker. 1984. "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality." In Frank Reynolds and Robert Moore, eds., *Anthropology and the Study of Religion.* Chicago, Ill.: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 105-125.

----. 1987. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* Berkeley, L.A.: University of California Press

Caciola, Nancy. 1994. *Discerning Spirits. Sanctity and Possession in Later Middle Ages.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

[22] A significant difference -and an exception to the carefully constructed parallelism- between the miracles of the Virgin of Fertő and the evangelical miracles of Jesus Christ is the fact that the Mary of Titkos értelmő róza is not supposed to, strictly speaking, raise the dead. Those women and men she had cured are described as having been close to or on the threshold of death, but never beyond. The explanatory texts, attached to the stories themselves suggest that earthly and spiritual medicine -doctors and prayers- cannot eliminate death, they can only postpone it, and this is what the Virgin Mary can achieve herself (op. cit., 176-178; 241-242).

Crain, Mary M. 1991. “Poetics and Politics in the Ecuadorean Andes: Women’s Narratives of Death and Devil Possession.” *American Ethnologist* 18.1, February: 67-89.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. 1987. *Fiction in the Archives. Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France.* Stanford: Stanford University Press

----. 1995. *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press

Esterházy, Pál. 1994. *Az egész világon levő csudálatos Boldogságos Szűz képeinek rövideden föltett eredeti.* (1690) Ed. Péter Kőszeghy, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó (facsimile of the Nagyszombat edition, Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua XXX)

King, Margaret L. 1991. *Women of the Renaissance*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press (Women in Culture and Society)

Klaniczay, Gábor. 1990/91.“*Miraculum* und *Maleficium*. Einige Überlegungen zu den weiblichen Heiligen des Mitteltalters in Mitteleuropa.” *Wissenschaftskolleg Jahrbuch* (Berlin), 224-252.

----. 1997. “Miraculum and Maleficium: Reflections Concerning Late Medieval Female Sainthood.” In R. Po-Chia Hsia and R. W. Scribner eds., *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe.* Wolfenbütteler Forschungen Bd. 78. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 49-74.

Knapp, Éva. 1985. “Egy feltáratlan forráscsoport: barokk kori mirákulumos könyvek magyarországi búcsújáróhelyekről.” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 89: 90-100.

----. 1995-1997. “A barokk kori nyomtatott mirákulumos könyvek jellemzői.” In *Az Egyetemi Könyvtár Évkönyvei* 7-8: 123-159.

Knapp, Éva and Gábor Tüskés. 1999. “Das erste Mirakelbuch von Mariatal (1661) und seine Wirkungsgeschichte.” In *Simpliciana. Schriften der Grimmelshausen-Gesellschaft XXI*: 213-232. (Peter Lang: Sonderdruck)

----.1996. “Barokk kori mirákulumos könyvek illusztráció-sorozatai.” *Magyar Könyvszemle* 112.1: 23-40.

Knapp, Éva, Gábor Tüskés and Géza Galavics. 1994. “Esterházy Pál: Az egész világon levő csudálatos Boldogságos Szűz képeinek rövideden föltett eredeti. Nagyszombat, 1690.” In Esterházy, Pál. *Az egész világon levő csudálatos Boldogságos Szűz képeinek rövideden föltett eredeti.* (1690) Ed. Péter Kőszeghy, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó (facsimile of the Nagyszombat edition, Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua XXX)

Kristóf, Ildikó. 1990. "'Wise Women', Sinners and the Poor: the Social Background of Witch-Hunting in a 16/18th-Century Calvinist City of Eastern Hungary." *Acta Ethnographica. A Periodical of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, 37.1-4: 93-119.

----. 1997. "Elements of Demonology in Hungarian Calvinist Literature Printed in Debrecen in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism* (Washington State University, Pullman) 16. 2, Fall: 9-17.

----. 1998. *"Ördögi mesterséget nem cselekedtem." A boszorkányüldözés társadalmi és kulturális háttere a kora újkori Debrecenben és Bihar vármegyében.* ("I have not done any diabolic deeds." The social and cultural background of witch-hunting in Debrecen and Bihar county.) Debrecen: Ethnica

Lawless, Elaine J. 1994. "Writing the Body in the Pulpit: Female-sexed Texts." *Journal of American Folklore* 107.423, Winter: 55-81.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1962. *La pensée sauvage*. Paris: Librairie Plon (Collection Agora)

Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" In Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 67-87.

----. eds. 1989 [1981]. *Sexual Meanings. The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. Cambridge ETC: Cambridge University Press

Propp, Vladimir Iakovlevich. 1968 [1928]. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Trans. Lawrence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press

Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist. 1974. “Women, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview." In EADEM and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 17-42.

Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist and Lamphere, Louise,eds. 1974. *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press

Szörényi, László. 1995. “Esterházy Pál: Az Boldogságos Szűz Mária szombatja, azaz minden szombat napokra való áétatosságok." In Esterházy, Pál. *Az Boldogságos Szűz Mária szombatja, azaz minden szombat napokra való áétatosságok*. (1691) Ed. Péter Kőszeghy, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó (facsimile of the Nagyszombat edition, Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua XXXI)

1698. *Titkos értelmő róza a'vagy a Förtő mellett lévő Boldog Aszszony csudálatos érdeminek Drága illattyáról, és Jó-tételényinek, s' lelki, testi üdvösséges*

orvoslásinak egynéhány Példáiról együgyüen emlekező könyvecske. [...] *Meg-iratott 1697. A' Förtő melléki Páter Franciscánusok által*. Wien: Leopold Voigt

Tüskés, Gábor. 1992. "Az exemplum a 16-17. század katolikus áhítati irodalmában." *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* XCVI.2: 133-151.

----. 1993. *Búcsújárás a barokk kori Magyarországon a mirákulumirodalom tükrében*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó

Tüskés, Gábor and Éva Knapp. 1989-1990. "A mindennapi élet veszélyhelyzetei Magyarországon a barokk kori mirakulumirodalom tükrében." *Orvostörténeti Közlemények* 125-132: 65-79.

Wiesner, Merry E. 1993. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, England, New York, USA, Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press